

In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

September 20, 1998

Examining Education

Todd Gitlin

on the Fall of Liberal Arts

Lawrence Soley

on the Rise of For-Profit Universities

David Moberg

on the Reform of Chicago Schools

Christopher Ott

on the False Promise of Technology

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WORKING PANELS

- ▲ **Barbara Epstein** on feminism today
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- ▲ **Dan Cantor** on electoral strategies
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- ▲ **Karen Dolan** on the House Progressive Caucus
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The promise of a new urban agenda
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- ▲ **Katherine Sciacchitano** on welfare reform
- ▲ **Robert McChesney** on the media
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...and others to be announced.

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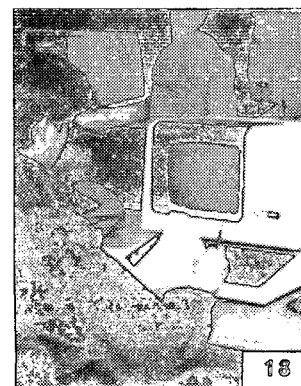
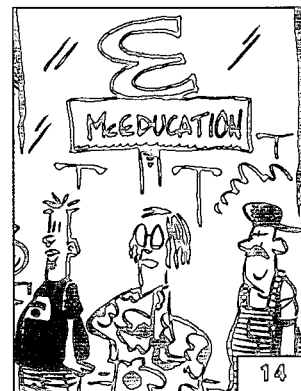
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Letters

Party Favors

In the last paragraph of Julia Goldberg's article, "Spoiling the Party" (August 9), she says: "But if this fails, the New Mexico Greens may well have only helped Newt Gingrich remain Speaker of the House." Neither Green congressional candidate will win. But they will have done far more damage than that. They will have helped elect two Republicans who are anti-choice, anti-environmental protection laws, anti-public schools, anti-universal health care, anti-civil rights for gays—in fact anti just about everything they claim to support, not to mention indifferent to saving Social Security. Who benefits from this? Certainly not the people Carol Miller believes she serves. But then, she also believes she isn't delusional.

Doris Higgins
Albuquerque, N.M.

To be feasible, the Instant Runoff Voting supported by the Green Party requires a computerized system for reading voter preferences from ballots. In the real world, where mechanical voting machines and hand-marked ballots are still widely used, a different system would be needed. For example, candidates could be required to rank their competitors in order of preference, which would be indicated on the ballot. If no candidate received a majority in the initial voting, the candidate with the fewest votes would be "eliminat-

ed," and his or her votes allocated to a remaining candidate according to his preferences. The process would repeat, re-allocating the original votes of eliminated candidates to their preferred remaining opponents, until one candidate receives a majority.

Elmer P. Chase III
Elmhurst, Pa.

How quaint of Julia Goldberg to characterize the United States' almost universal "winner take all" voting system as an "electoral system that allows a candidate to win with less than 50 percent of the vote." Our voting system, operating through electoral districts defined by geographic boundaries, produces grossly distorted representation precisely because candidates who receive substantially less than a majority of the vote cannot be elected.

After the 1992 elections, for example, 89 percent (eight out of nine) of congressional representatives from my home state of Washington were Democrats, even though Democrats received only 56 percent of the statewide vote. Obviously, that hurts minority parties (and I don't mean the Republican one). If the Green Party had received 22 percent of the statewide vote, how many congressional seats would it have won? Thanks to the duopoly politicians and winner-take-all elections, the answer is not two but zero.

If we are to achieve the ideals of a

genuine democracy, we need proportional representation.

Lester Goldstein
Seattle

Mental Error

While I agree with Juan Gonzalez that the rapid emptying of state psychiatric hospitals is a problem ("Madness and Social Policy," September 6), his statement that people are being released "onto our streets without concern for the public" grossly mischaracterizes the mentally ill.

To substantiate his fearmongering, Gonzalez cites four attacks by people with mental illness in New York since 1993. Since that year there have been thousands of murders in that city. Four does not demonstrate a trend.

The real problem with deinstitutionalization is the suffering of the mentally ill who do not receive adequate treatment. I expect stigmatization from slasher movies, but I find it disturbing in the pages of *In These Times*.

Mark Furlong
Chicago

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SYLVIA

By Nicole Hollander



Medicare Patients Win One in Court

Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) are a relatively new phenomenon in the United States. Having risen from the ashes of the Clinton administration's failed 1993 health care proposals for a quasi-governmental system, today's HMOs are fully privatized. They retain two of the basic features of the Clinton proposal. First, they take costly decisions about a patient's care out of the hands of doctors and place them in the hands of bureaucrats. Second, they are operated by insurance companies whose primary purpose is to make a profit for their stockholders.

Since 1993, HMOs have grown so rapidly that the majority of those insured are now enrolled in them. The government, too, now contracts with HMOs to cover many Medicare beneficiaries. Despite high administrative costs and the siphoning-off of part of the health care dollar for profit-taking, HMOs have had some success in keeping the cost of health care from rising as rapidly as in previous years.

So where do the savings come from? Avoiding expensive and often unnecessary procedures account for some of the savings, but most come from denying or skimping on needed care. As HMOs imposed their draconian policies, a flood of complaints followed. The public outcry against "drive-through mastectomies" and one-day hospital stays after childbirth grew so loud that even the Republicans joined in passing legislation to require minimum levels of care.

Most of the public outrage comes from private-sector patients. But the many Medicare beneficiaries—by 2002, they are expected to number 10 million—are also being denied needed care. Unlike the private patients, however, they have legal recourse because Medicare law defines and guarantees minimum standards of care.

So Medicare beneficiaries sued. They filed a nationwide class-action suit in the federal district court in Tucson, Ariz., and in 1996, Judge Alfredo Marquez ruled in their favor. He found that while HMOs are private corporations, their decisions about care amounted to government action because they were acting as proxies for the Medicare program. Donna Shalala, secretary of Health and Human Services, didn't like that at all. She appealed Marquez's ruling, arguing that the government should not be held responsible for the decisions of private parties. Marquez, she complained, had gone further than necessary in protecting patients' rights.

Last month, however, in a major victory, the Federal Appeals Court for the Ninth Circuit upheld Marquez's decision. The court's opinion, written for a three-judge

panel by Charles E. Wiggins, a former Republican congressman from California, argued that HMOs were denying Medicare beneficiaries due process, as required by the Fifth Amendment. Wiggins wrote that the government cannot avoid the due process requirements of the Constitution merely by delegating its duty to determine standards of Medicare coverage to private entities. HMO decisions, Wiggins said, amount to "government action." He also found that the administration had failed to guarantee that HMOs with federal contracts were adhering to the government's policies. Indeed, he said, despite HMO denials of adequate care, the administration has knowingly renewed contracts with HMOs that violated the rules.

In 1997, Clinton issued executive orders to provide appeal rights to people covered by Medicare, Medicaid and veterans' health programs. These orders set out rules of evidence to support claims and define how that evidence can be gathered. Yet, the administration continues vigorously to oppose the court's action, and the more stringent standards it has set. Ironically, Bill Clinton has denounced both Republicans and HMOs for resisting his demand for a "patients' bill of rights" that would guarantee for all Americans some of the rights that the court has now mandated for Medicare recipients.

By 2002, Medicare patients enrolled in HMOs are expected to number 10 million—or 25 percent of all Medicare patients. Despite federal guidelines, these patients were being denied needed care.

Clinton's rules say an HMO must ordinarily respond to a Medicare patient's request for treatment in 14 days. The court allows only five days.

Marquez also found that HMO notices "were often illegible" and that they "failed to specify the reasons for denial." So he ruled that HMOs denying or terminating service must issue notices of appeal rights, written "in at least 12-point type"—so that it will be readable by older people.

The administration didn't like any of this. In urging the appeals court not to expand patients' rights, it said that a beneficiary denied service by an HMO "can obtain such services outside the plan and then seek reimbursement for their cost." The court responded that such a solution would provide "little comfort to an elderly poor patient."

Fortunately, thus far, the court has followed Clinton's rhetoric, not his actions.—J.W.

PRI Bails Out Mexico's Rich

By Fred Rosen

MEXICO CITY

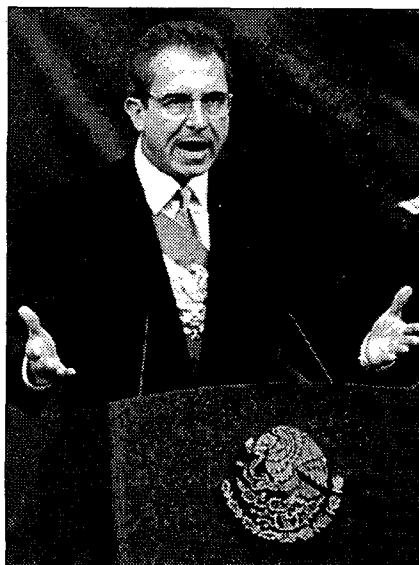
A presidential proposal to "socialize" \$65 billion owed to Mexican banks has cranked up the already high temperature of Mexican politics. For many, the obscure term "Fobaproa" has now become shorthand for the financial impunity enjoyed by those at the highest levels of political and economic power.

Fobaproa is the name of a semi-private bank insurance fund created in 1990 by the Mexican Central Bank, which purchases the overdue debt of member banks with ten-year promissory notes, backed only by its eventual ability to collect from debtors. In March, President Ernesto Zedillo sent legislators a proposal to convert the liabilities of Fobaproa into public debt.

Zedillo's proposal would back Fobaproa's promissory notes—now valued at more than 15 percent of Mexico's gross domestic product—with public revenues, allowing them to be traded in secondary markets and thus quickly converted into liquid assets for the banks. This means that money owed to the banks would be "socialized"—paid for by the hard-pressed Mexican public—and big debtors would lose all incentives to pay what they owe.

In the face of falling income and high interest rates, the country's debt crisis is real, and all three of Mexico's leading parties support the idea of shoring up the farm, home and small-business debt of hundreds of thousands of Mexicans who are honestly squeezing out partial payments or are genuinely bankrupt. However, an extremely large part of the debt purchased by Fobaproa is owed by well-connected companies and wealthy individuals

perfectly capable of paying up. Indeed, more than half the \$65 billion in debt purchased by Fobaproa since 1995, according to both the left opposition and government sources, is said to be owed by just 600 or so debtors. There



President Ernesto Zedillo

are also suspicions that the Zedillo proposal is meant to bail out several bankers who "lent" themselves large sums and cannot pay it back.

A case in point involves a banker named Angel Isodoro Rodriguez, a sharp dresser known as "El Divino," who fled the country in 1995 when serious irregularities were discovered at his bank, Banpais. Banpais was taken over by the government and reprivatized to another financial group with the provision that all its dubious debts would be absorbed by Fobaproa. Now that El Divino has returned to face charges, he acknowledges that some of his bank's missing money was a multimillion-dollar contri-

bution to the 1994 presidential campaign of Zedillo's Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). "It wasn't me who lent money to the campaign," Rodriguez told the press. "It was Banpais. The loan was institutional support for the PRI."

The leading left-opposition Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) has upped the ante by releasing the names of debtors who would be bailed out under the Zedillo plan. A few are members of the *Forbes* list of Latin American billionaires, and many others, like El Divino, turn out to be prominent contributors to the long-ruling PRI. In the face of the secrecy surrounding Fobaproa, the PRD—backed cautiously by the conservative National Action Party (PAN)—has demanded a public accounting.

Meanwhile, the government has mounted an intense PR campaign in favor of Fobaproa. Radio and television ads extol the virtues of the rescue program and attack the PRD for violating banking confidentiality. "Those who committed frauds," the government commercials say, "should be punished to the full extent of the law ... but [the PRD's] demagoguery unjustly damages the reputations of honorable people."

PRD National Chairman Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador vigorously defends his party's actions. "If you want the public to assume the debt of private individuals," he says, "then public information is indispensable. Only among accomplices is the legalization of a giant public debt authorized with eyes closed." ■

Fred Rosen is editor of NACLA Report on the Americas.

Knee-jerks at *The Weekly Standard*

"Critics on the right have long charged CNN with a knee-jerk anti-Americanism," writes critic-on-the-right Eric Felten, in the July 20 issue of *The Weekly Standard*. "The charge is true," he says, in an attack on the CNN report that the U.S. military deployed nerve gas in Laos (see "Smoke Screen," September 6). Felten accuses CNN producer April Oliver for acting "on a political agenda." Commenting on her work as a print journalist, Felten notes that in addition to writing for the "left-leaning *National Catholic Reporter*, she also wrote for the *Nation* and the hard-left *In These Times*." The end result, Felten says, "CNN gave free rein to left-wing conspiracy theorizing masquerading as investigative journalism."

So let's investigate. In *These Times* web page at <http://www.inthesetimes.com> contains the full text of both the "Abrams/Kohler Report" and April Oliver and Jack Smith's "Tailwind: Rebuttal to the Abrams/Kohler Report." Readers can judge for themselves.—J.B.

Childcare Workers Clamor for Respect—and a Raise

By Sonya Huber

If you're interested in a career with the lowest wages in the United States (\$11,500 per year, lower than parking attendants and animal baby-sitters) and only a 33 percent chance of getting health benefits, consider taking care of the nation's preschool children.

Teachers in the childcare industry, usually women (and, disproportionately, women of color), can't afford to stay in a field that is so demanding yet garners little respect or financial security. Workers are told that childcare is play rather than work, a natural activity for women that provides spiritual rewards rather than wages.

"It's a national disgrace," says Lynee Barbee, a Service Employees International Union (SEIU) organizer of childcare workers in Seattle. Barbee is working with teachers, parents and unions to educate the public about the vital role that day-care workers play in early childhood development. Barbee and other organizers say that better working conditions for childcare teachers will benefit everyone, especially children, in the short term. Ultimately, though, they say the funding base of the industry needs to shift away from parents, whose fees supply 90 percent of the average day-care center's budget, to public funding.

Although parts of the economy are booming, real earnings for childcare workers have decreased by 20 percent since the mid-'70s. Consequently, turnover is high: 30 to 40 percent of teachers at childcare centers leave each year. Francie Hunt, a childcare worker in Gainesville, Fla., loved her job at La Petit Academy—but was paid only \$5.15 an hour. "I couldn't even afford to have a family of my own," she says.

At the same time, working parents with young children are hit with costs that average \$3,600 per child per year for care. The Center for the Childcare Workforce (CCW), a Washington, D.C.-based lobbying and advocacy group, sums up the current situation with this slogan: "Parents can't afford to

pay. Teachers can't afford to stay. We need to find a better way."

Childcare organizers say that best long-term solution is to follow the lead of Europe and increase federal funding for early childhood education. "Why is it that if you're a six-year-old you have public education, and if you're five, you don't?" Barbee asks.

Yet the federal government has made

President Clinton has pledged to spend \$21.7 billion over the next five years on childcare through tax credits and development block grants, but his proposals will not help to restructure the industry (see "The Next Frontier," March 8). Stronger proposals, including the allocation of money for childcare from a tobacco settlement, have been defeated.

Meanwhile, extremely profitable childcare chains such as Children's Discovery Centers and KinderCare Learning Centers (the largest, with over 1,200 centers nationwide) are continuing to grow. These childcare chains pay the lowest overall wage in the industry and suffer the highest turnover. The corporate chain Hunt

worked for in Florida instructed her to display clean, unused toys when prospective clients would visit. "It wasn't child-centered," says Hunt. "Everything was a marketing scam."

Though chains account for only about 9 percent of the 90,000 childcare centers in the United States, their earning potential has drawn the attention of Wall Street.

Citing extremely favorable conditions—the growing need for childcare, the "highly fragmented" nature of the industry and a largely non-unionized work force—a 1996 internal report published

by Lehman Brothers concluded, "We have not seen a similar growth opportunity since healthcare in the 1970s."

With little federal action to regulate the quality of care, childcare organizers and advocates are turning to the local level. Since 1991, CCW has organized "Worthy Wage Days" across the country. On May 1, a handful of childcare centers in Seattle closed their doors for the day, and many centers hosted edu-

Continued on page 6



almost no commitment to supporting childcare, allowing a tax deduction of only \$1,400 for childcare costs (you can write off a larger amount for gambling debts in some cases). The Department of Education doesn't fund pre-kindergarten programs, except for Head Start, which serves a limited number of low-income children. In 1996, in Massachusetts, for example, subsidized childcare slots for low-income children met only 39 percent of the total need.

Appall-O-Meter

The In These Times Index of Indecencies

By David Futrelle

Upward and Onward

8-1

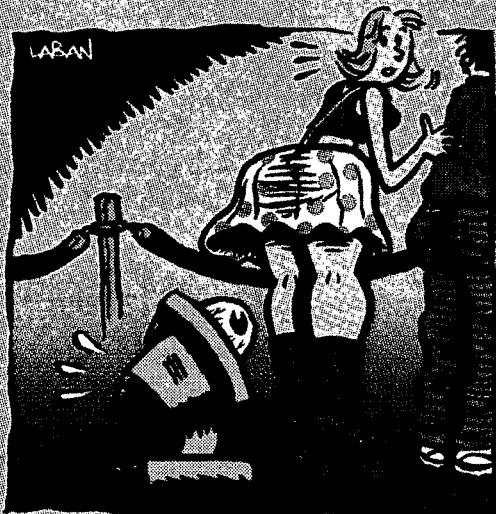
"Upskirt" pornography—video and photos taken, well, up the skirts of unsuspecting women—is more popular than ever on the Net, with hundreds of Web sites devoted to this particular fetish. Though few women appreciate being filmed from below without their consent, the law is "surprisingly unhelpful" to police trying to stop these stealth pornographers, according to The Associated Press.

In one incident this past summer, police had to release a man caught filming up the skirts of women waiting in line at Disneyland because he hadn't broken any law. Online distributors of these images claim that their sites are a tremendous time saver for busy voyeurs. Florida porn distributor Skip Hambrook explained, "[Upskirt pornography] allows people the luxury of looking up women's skirts without having to stand in stairwells all day."

Taliband-Aid

8-3

Militant fundamentalism can be dangerous to your health. A recent report from Physicians for Human Rights reports that the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan has cut off



women's access to health care. Some 90 percent of women the group interviewed in Kabul, the country's capital, said access to health care was more difficult to come by since the Taliban took charge in 1996, and 70 percent of those sur-

veyed said their own health was worse off. Women in Afghanistan are regularly denied treatment if they do not bring a male chaperone with them into the waiting room.

Judge Not

6-4

Eager to escape from jury duty, Michael Egli of Daytona Beach, Fla., didn't think to mention that he's undergoing kidney dialysis—a legitimate excuse for not serving. Instead, *USA Today* reports, Egli wrote the authorities a note expounding upon his dislike of cops, judges and black people. When Egli replied to a second summons with another racist note, Judge Richard Orfinger brought him to court, and ordered him to apologize—or face up to six months in jail for contempt of court. Egli, who apologized, is now doing 50 hours of community service.

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Continued from page 5

cational events for staff, directors, and the community. In Gainesville, Hunt and members of the Alachua County Childcare Teachers Association released the results of a county-wide study on childcare workplace conditions. At the press conference, they asked reporters to sit on a child-sized toilet, illustrating that one-third of preschool teachers don't even have access to adult-sized bathroom facilities.

Unions are also increasing their focus on the childcare industry. In Seattle, the SEIU's Childcare Union Project (CUP) plans to raise public awareness, organize childcare workers to fight for better working conditions and more benefits,

and, ultimately, to push for increased state funding. Barbee, the project organizer, points to public school teachers and nurses as examples of workers who won respect and changed public perceptions of their professions by unionizing. She hopes to do the same for childcare workers.

Childcare unions have been organized by the UAW and other unions since the '70s, but Barbee says unionization isn't the whole answer. The small number of chains would have to be unionized nationally worksite by worksite. And the large number of independent for-profit and not-for-profit centers do not generate enough surplus to give workers significant wage increases. Instead of

unionizing shop by shop, CUP is working to get a master contract approved by a number of centers across King County. Some center directors and boards have voluntarily granted recognition of the unions at their centers, and CUP expects 15 centers to have recognized unions by October.

CUP hopes that its program of public education and the growth of unionized centers will make it a force to be reckoned with during Washington state's next round of budget allocations in 1999. "Childcare workers are smart, committed people who solve problems every day with 4- and 5-year-olds," Barbee says. "Hopefully they will be able to solve problems among adults." ■

Knock On Wood

By Craig Aaron

It's becoming harder and harder to find investigative journalism on the newsstand. For some good, old-fashioned muckraking, it takes a trip to the hardware store.

Between articles on paint scrapers, biscuit joiners and grout, The March/April issue of **This Old House**, the magazine spin-off of the long-running PBS home-fix-it show, features an in-depth look at the environmental and health hazards of pressure-treated lumber.

First developed in the '30s, pressure-treating infuses wood with a solution called chromated copper arsenate (CCA), which makes lumber resistant to rot and insects for decades. The main components of CCA are copper (which kills fungi), chromium (which locks the formula in the wood) and arsenic (an insecticide). While copper and chromium can wreak havoc on plant and marine life, author Curtis Rist reports, it's arsenic, long a staple of murder mysteries, that poses the real danger to humans. "We call it a three-fer," a Florida EPA official says. "It can leave you dead as a doornail at high doses. It can kill you at moderate amounts over a longer period. And it's a carcinogen at low levels."

For many years, pressure-treated products were used sparingly. But when long-lasting hardwoods like redwood and cedar became more expensive, marketers of soft, plantation-grown Southern pine used pressure-treating to sell their product at a premium. Last year, 467 million cubic feet of it were sold. While each piece of pressure-treated wood contains a vague warning from the EPA about "certain hazards" posed by arsenic, Rist writes, there's no clue that "a single 12-foot-long 2-by-6 contains more than an ounce of arsenic—enough to kill 250 adults were they to ingest it."

As the wood preserving industry is quick to point out, the arsenic poses no harm to humans as long as it remains locked in the wood. The real question is whether it seeps out. In the late '80s, scientists discovered that acid could

reverse the chemical bond and release the arsenic. Then, in 1996, a pair of researchers in Connecticut started looking under people's decks, to see if acid rain might be having a similar effect on pressure-treated lumber outside the lab.

Under all but one of the seven decks in their small survey, the researchers discovered evidence of seepage.

The arsenic levels under the decks averaged 20 times higher than in the surrounding soil. The older the deck, the more contamination. Under one deck, the level of arsenic was 35-times higher than the level at which the EPA can

mandate a cleanup. Larger studies are being launched. "The big risk with pressure-treated wood," environmental chemist Jerome Nriagu told the magazine, "is that the arsenic will leach out and contaminate the groundwater, and then we will drink it."

A more immediate problem, Rist says, is what to do with old pressure-treated lumber. Other kinds of wood can be mulched, recycled or burned. But when it comes to pressure-treated scrap, "with each truckload of cutoffs or old decking, at least several pounds of arsenic hitchhikes a ride." The volume of scrap is growing, with every piece headed for the landfill.

Incinerating pressure-treated lumber is illegal because fire concentrates the chemicals, and burning even a small amount with other debris creates hazardous waste. Rist describes unknowing homeowners who burned the wood for heat and suffered blackouts and seizures as a result. Cattle have been killed by eating arsenic-laden ash. Indeed, ingest-

ing as little as a tablespoon the ash may be enough to kill a 150-pound person.

What's the kicker? Perfectly viable non-toxic alternatives are available. They cost a fraction more, but the recipes—which are widely used in Japan and Europe—are much safer. "Wood preservers could easily switch to arsenic free formulas," Rist concludes. "If consumers demanded it."

• • • • •

More questions have been raised about CNN's internal investigation into its now infamous Operation Tailwind story. The June 25 issue of **Editor & Publisher** reports that five ex-CIA agents—all active during the Vietnam War—were hired by CNN to look into the charges that sarin gas was used on a CIA-directed military operation in Laos. Conflict of interest, anyone?

Speaking of which, the mother-of-all conflicts of interest appears in the second issue of **Brill's Content**. Following a lengthy interview with CNN News Group chairman Tom Johnson, **Time** editor Norman Pearlstine and attorney Floyd Abrams on the decision to retract the Tailwind story, editor Steven Brill includes the following disclosure:

Editor Steven Brill, who conducted this interview, is a close friend of Floyd Abrams, and Abrams acts as this magazine's lawyer. In addition, Brill and Time Warner were partners in Court TV and American Lawyer Media until last year; as a result of a partnership, which ended in part because of a disagreement between Brill and Time Warner vice-chairman Ted Turner, Brill maintains an interest in shares of Time Warner, any significant change in which could materially affect his net worth.

Jeez, Steve, maybe you should have assigned the story to someone else. ■



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East Timor's Chance for Peace

By Arnold Kohen

There has been a flurry of activity and announcements regarding East Timor since the resignation of Indonesian President Suharto in May. East Timor has been the site of untold human suffering since Indonesia invaded the former Portuguese colony in 1975 with the crucial help of American weapons and diplomatic support. A third of East Timor's original population of 700,000 has perished during the occupation.

The fall of the Suharto government and the ongoing financial crisis in Indonesia have increased pressure on the Indonesian government of B.J. Habibie to boost its tarnished international image. Recently, there have been widely publicized announcements of Indonesian troop withdrawals from East Timor. On August 5, a communiqué outlining a U.N.-brokered agreement between Indonesia and Portugal called for "wide-ranging autonomy" for East Timor, "without prejudice" to "basic positions of principle." This last part leaves open the possibility of an eventual referendum on independence. Still, for all the fanfare, it is far from clear if we are any closer to a just settlement of the conflict.

What is certain is that Indonesia needs all the international good will it can muster. East Timor has been an irritant in its relations with the United States and many other nations, especially since 1991 when Indonesian troops massacred more than 250 people in Dili, the East Timor capital, drawing worldwide attention. The 1996 Nobel Peace Prize, shared by East Timor's Roman Catholic bishop, Carlos Ximenes Belo, and the spokesman of the resistance movement, Jose Ramos Horta, was intended to spur a solution that respected the right to self-determination. That only made things more difficult for Jakarta.

Then, earlier this year, the Indonesian economy all but collapsed, driving Suharto from office. He was succeeded by his pliant vice president, Habibie. Indonesia will need at least \$70 billion in foreign loans to begin rebuilding its financial house, along with heavy support for years to come.

Close observers of the diplomatic scene in Jakarta say that the official Indonesian position on East Timor may be shifting, but until there are lasting changes, it is hazardous to put faith in any one signal. Foreign Minister Ali Alatas recognizes that a show of flexibility wins praise from foreign governments whose good will is vital. Announcements of troop withdrawals are similarly helpful, even if the number of troops remaining behind is so large as to render the withdrawals meaningless in practical terms. Some reports say that new troops have already landed as replacements. Belo

says the troops were simply moved from one place to another on the island. "We must denounce this," he says.

Alatas has pushed the view that autonomy is a final—not an interim—status for East Timor. The problem is that other parts of Indonesia that have been granted limited autonomy have received almost nothing of substance.

It is unrealistic to expect that a transitional government like Habibie's would be able to do more at this time: Going any further would antagonize the all-powerful military. On the more positive side, an elected government with political legitimacy might be able to agree to real concessions, even a referendum.

If the process were to end where it is now, it would be a devastating blow for East Timor. "Those in favor of integration [with Indonesia] are a small minority, while those wanting a referendum comprise the majority

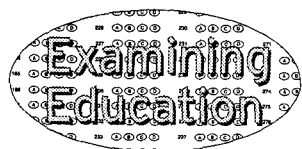
After so many people have died at the hands of the military, it is hardly surprising that there is scant support for Indonesian rule in East Timor.

whose numbers are growing all the time," Belo says. "A referendum is the most democratic way to resolve the issue." Tens of thousands of East Timorese have demonstrated for independence. After so many people have died at the hands of the military, it is hardly surprising that there is scant support for Indonesian rule.

The first order of business is to implement the points outlined in the U.N. agreement that call for releasing political prisoners and including legitimate East Timorese leaders in the negotiations. There also must be a strong push to demilitarize East Timor quickly, and to establish a U.N. presence to protect human rights.

Those closest to the scene, both in the diplomatic arena and within East Timor itself, emphasize that Indonesia will not make concessions unless pressed to do so: Maximum international pressure is needed if an end to East Timor's long nightmare is to be finally realized. After supporting Indonesian brutality, the United States has a responsibility to act. ■

Arnold Kohen is the author of From The Place of the Dead: The Epic Struggles of Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo of East Timor, to be published by St. Martin's Press in 1999.



Chicago's 4 R's: Reading, 'Riting, 'Rithmetic and Reform

By David Moberg

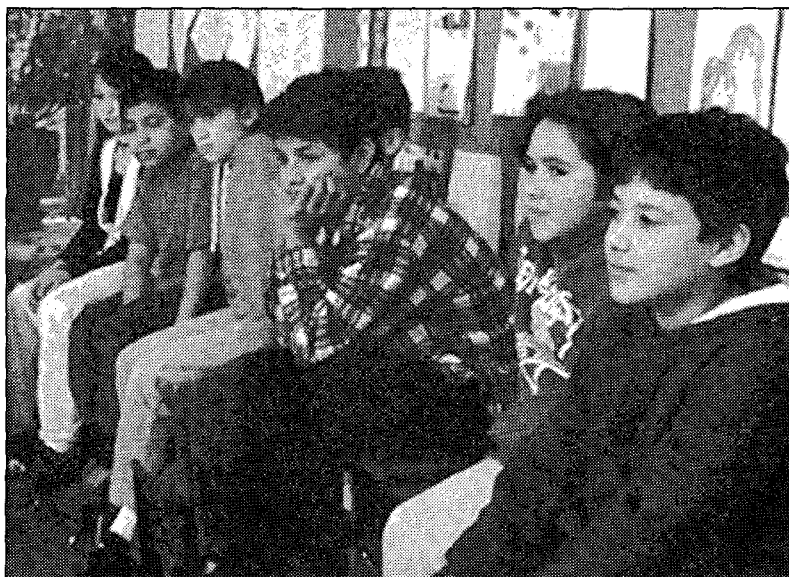
CHICAGO

Earhart Elementary on Chicago's South Side is an urban school success story—the beneficiary of one of the most sweeping, radical reforms of any big city school system. A small school of 222 students, nearly all of them from low-income black families who live in a stable working-class neighborhood, Earhart experienced a dramatic improvement after the Illinois legislature passed the Chicago School Reform Law in 1988. The law granted Local School Councils (LSCs)—elected bodies composed of parent, teacher and community representatives—the power to hire and fire principals, to make major decisions about educational policy and to control about 15 percent of the school system's budget. The theory behind the law was that strong principals, who were accountable to the local community and were granted the freedom to innovate, would become educational leaders who could organize and inspire teachers.

The theory worked at Earhart. After careful deliberation, Earhart's LSC hired a new principal who developed a strong curriculum that focused on literature, not "skills and drills." Even before reform, Earhart had been a good school by Chicago standards, with a third of students testing above the national average on reading tests. But by 1997, three-fourths of Earhart students were above average. The school also used its discretionary funds to hire special supplementary teachers in math and science, who could tutor students with problems, train regular classroom teachers and enrich classes with science experiments or discussions of mathematical ideas.

Reform didn't work everywhere. Terrell Elementary, also on the South Side, is a story of continued frustration and failure. Located near a crime-ridden public housing project, Terrell was three times the size of Earhart, suffered from a 40 percent turnover of its student body each year, and attracted few top-notch teachers to its dangerous neighborhood. Despite adopting a widely praised reading program, Terrell students made no measurable progress. In 1990, 94 percent of Terrell students were reading below the national norm, a figure which has shown no improvement.

Schools like Terrell have given the Chicago system a per-



STEVE KAGAN

haps undeserved reputation. "The worst in the nation," is how former Secretary of Education William Bennett once put it. But heading into its 10th year of reform, it is clear that there are more schools heading in the direction of Earhart than floundering like Terrell. Reformers, however, agree less now than they did a decade ago about precisely what constitutes reform or what works.

For many years, the Democratic machine controlled Chicago's Board of Education, exploiting it for political patronage and maintaining strict racial segregation. Since so many white families sent children to parochial schools, the growth in the city's black population led to an even greater African-American presence in the schools. Though blacks make up 40 percent of the city's population, 55 percent of public school students are black, 31 percent are Latino and only 11 percent are white. Over the years, blacks gained more influence in both the administration and in the teachers union. At the same time, the schools lost political and financial support, just as hard-core poverty was growing with the flight of manufacturing jobs from the central city. Today,

nearly four-fifths of students come from low-income families.

Wracked by financial crisis and instability (along with recurring teacher strikes), the schools were burdened by a wasteful and bloated bureaucracy. After Mayor Harold Washington took office in 1983, African-American and white middle-class parents who were tempted to flee the city because of the schools became the backbone of a school reform movement. The resulting 1988 reform law took aim at the bureaucracy, shifting control and money to the local level, where LSCs demanded that the schools educate their students, not doom them to failure. But roughly one-third of LSCs did not function as intended. Some were corrupt or embroiled in internal conflicts, but mostly the councils simply were not doing their job.

The process for "remediation" of these laggards wasn't working. In 1995, the state legislature enacted new legislation that gave Chicago Mayor Richard Daley direct control of the Chicago school system by allowing him to appoint a new board. Daley picked two of his top aides to run the schools, Board President Gery Chico and Chief Executive Paul Vallas, the former city budget director.

During his tenure, Vallas can point to new financial stability (even though it was accomplished through raids on teacher pensions and short-term fixes) and to a \$2 billion program of school repair and construction with city-backed bonds. He also has established standards for students to be promoted after grades 3, 6, 8 and 9, requiring summer school for all who fail and then holding back any students who can't pass tests given at the end of summer school.

High school performance remains the biggest challenge for reform and has shown little improvement since 1988. Vallas has promoted a "back to basics" curriculum and, using the new powers of the 1995 law, has "reconstituted" seven high schools where more than 85 percent of students scored below the national test average. "Reconstitution" involves dismissing the entire staff and appointing a new principal who can hire anyone she chooses.

There was little argument about the need to do something about the high schools. Math test scores had stagnated and reading scores dropped so that, in 1996, roughly 80 percent of high school students were below the national averages. Since then, scores have risen so that about 70 percent of high school students test below the average.

In 1996, Vallas put a number of elementary schools, including Terrell, on probation. Vallas appointed a new principal at Terrell, giving her new discretionary money that was used in part to hire a disciplinarian and a reading specialist. As the monthly Chicago education magazine, *Catalyst*, reported in a lengthy series, the new principal is energetic and hopeful. But it is still unclear what will work at Terrell, where the problems students bring from their families and neighborhoods create severe obstacles to learning.

Such obstacles are not insurmountable. Some schools in neighborhoods like the one surrounding Terrell have made substantial progress. More than a quarter of all public elemen-

tary schools in Chicago boosted average reading test scores by 15 percent or more from 1990 to 1997. There was nearly a 50 percent increase in the percentage of students in 3rd through 8th grades who scored at or above the average on national reading tests. About 35 percent of those elementary students test at the norm in reading and about 40 percent do so in math.

Chicago schools now combine "democratic localism," as University of Chicago Professor Anthony Bryk describes the 1988 reform, with a renewed centralism that imposes strict standards and dictates from on high. While many reformers acknowledge the need for drastic intervention in failing schools, they attack Daley and Vallas for going too far.

Some reformers defend the 1995 law (and at least some of Vallas' actions). "I don't see [the 1995 law] as a retreat, but as giving teeth to what we had in the 1988 reforms," argues Alfred Hess, director of the Center for Urban School Policy at Northwestern University. "What's disappointing to many of us is that it's really needed. We had naively hoped we wouldn't need this heavy stick."

But even if more accountability was needed, many veteran reformers argue that the original "democratic localism" was already working well, if slowly, especially in the elementary schools. They say that Vallas has gone far beyond his legitimate role of intervening in failing schools and is undermin-

Reform may be eclipsed by a faulty claim that strict, centralized controls and get-tough methods are what it takes to save public schools.

ing the successful elements of school reform. "We felt [initially] there wasn't a necessary contradiction between local control and a good system of accountability and there might be benefits of having the mayor more involved in issues like the condition of the schools," says Don Moore, executive director of Designs for Change, a Chicago

school reform group he founded in 1977. "But they've really overstepped what the law permits, and their educational ideas have this extreme focus on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills that is undermining the kind of changes in practice that we identified in schools that are really making progress."

The criticism of Vallas from some parents and teachers is even harsher. Julie Woestehoff, a parent of Chicago public school students who also directs the group Parents United for Responsible Education, says Vallas' "number one priority is to make the mayor look good. He has used and manipulated the school system in his quest to do that. The rise in test scores has been done through massive infusion of money into test preparation and massive retention of students, neither of which is educationally sound. He has raised test scores, but at the local school level he has destroyed much of the progress made since 1989."

Bowen High School teacher George Schmidt, a leading teachers' union dissident, accuses Daley and Vallas of conducting "an attack on public education based on magical thinking that leads many people to want to believe that amateurs with a good public relations organization can always do the job better than professionals like myself and my 40,000 colleagues."

There are several thrusts to the criticism of Vallas' strategy. First, the critics say, it ignores the progress already being made at the elementary school level under the original school reform. Test scores were already rising before the 1995 law—from about 23 percent of students scoring above national norms on reading in 1990 to about 30 percent in 1996 for grades three through eight.

Similarly, the Chicago Consortium on School Research concludes that nearly three-fifths of LSCs are "high functioning," with less than 15 percent suffering from ethical problems or excessive conflict. Moreover, strong LSCs and principals working together typically lead to better schools. The consortium found that schools with "strong democracy" were twice as likely as those with autocratic principals to improve teaching.

Second, there are serious problems with Vallas' heavy reliance on a single set of standardized test scores for judging school progress. The consortium recently demonstrated that the results of the Iowa Tests vary greatly according to which version of the test is used, throwing off year-to-year comparisons. Also, the current measures do not take into account the high turnover in many schools. To measure a particular school's performance, it would make more sense to see what happens with students who stay from year to year, not to com-

pare two radically different sets of students.

More important, says Bryk, director of the consortium, many school principals—in a desperate bid to avoid probation or reconstitution—devote inordinate time to drilling students for the tests. Too often principals and teachers practice educational "triage," devoting resources to boost the test scores of students who are just below the norm in order to meet their quota of students above the norm, rather than trying to improve education for the majority of poorly performing students. Worst of all, the tests appear in some cases to be diverting teachers' efforts and undermining the real goal of reform. Bryk, who was a strong proponent of testing and holding schools accountable, argues that there are ways of testing that are much more broad-based and accurate—but they're also much more expensive.

Third, there are doubts about Vallas' remedies for low test scores. While there is popular support for holding back students who don't meet standards for promotion, academic research consistently shows that students who are held back don't do better academically and are more likely to drop out. In the early '80s, more than half of entering high school freshmen dropped out before graduation, but the rate dropped steadily after reform to about 40 percent. Vallas hopes the school sys-

Hail to the Chief

In his three years as chief executive of the Chicago School Board, Paul Vallas has shaken up the Chicago schools. He points to rising test scores and attendance and declining drop-out rates as evidence that his programs work. Still, a number of school reformers charge that he has traded a short-term political pay-off for long-term progress. In a recent interview with In These Times, Vallas responded to his critics.



In These Times: What is your proudest accomplishment during your tenure?

Paul Vallas: The restoration of confidence in the system. People are seeing the schools improve because there is a system of accountability that impacts everyone. Administrators have no contracts. Principals can be, and have been, removed. The process of working ineffective teachers out of the system has been streamlined. And the ending of social promotion and the setting of promotion standards have helped build people's confidence. We now have 28,000 children in early childhood programs and 200,000 kids in after-school programs. The Lighthouse Program will feed 165,000 children three meals a day at 3,000 schools. The system has just put 175,000 children through summer school. Three years ago, it only had 22,000 in summer school.

ITT: Critics say that the schools are putting too great an emphasis on standardized testing.

Vallas: We have seen three years of improvement in the nationally based Iowa Basic Skills test. For the third year in a row, our Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP) score

has increased. In the last IGAP test, students showed improvement in 16 of 18 categories. If it had not been for Chicago's growth in math and science, the state averages would have declined. And for the third year in a row, we have improved ACT scores for college entrance after seven years of decline.

Now that the kids are doing better, these reformers are making excuses. We are teaching to the tests, they say. But the Iowa tests are either reading or math. And in math you either know the answer or you don't. You don't have a composition on a math exam. Our biggest improvement in test scores has been in math and science.

By every measure the system is improving. Our average daily attendance is at the highest level since the mid-'80s. Our enrollment is up three years in a row after 20 years in decline. And the exodus from eighth grade to high school is much less than it has been. More kids and families are staying in the system.

ITT: So, the criticism of the board is unfounded?

Vallas: These reform groups see us as a threat to their livelihood. Successful schools undermine their reason for existence. These are the same groups that since 1988 have been making excuses about why children can't learn, why the buildings can't be made safer, why the buildings can't be fixed. It was one excuse after another. Now we have labor peace, test scores rising, enrollment expanding, financial stability. My God, what is happening?

We don't care about the criticism from these groups. They had their chance at school reform and they failed miserably. Their criticisms have always had an innate lack of confidence in the ability of our children to do well. The schools are improving and it would be nice for our critics to admit it. ■

tem's new "transition centers"—separate high school facilities for students who fail standard tests after summer school—will get the students back on track, but it's too early to judge whether they will become the exception to the rule.

To complicate any assessment of what works, there are also simultaneous smaller-scale initiatives to introduce 14 public charter schools and to develop more smaller schools. There are also magnet schools and widespread choice within the system, so that 30 percent of elementary students and 55 percent of high school students do not attend their neighborhood school.

School funding is another unsettled issue. Chicago property taxes are high, but expenditures per pupil are half of what many wealthier suburbs spend (though more than many poor suburbs or downstate districts). The state legislature refuses to live up to its constitutional mandate to be the major funder of schools, instead providing only about a third of school funding. More money would permit LSCs to spend discretionary money on real innovation—instead of toilet paper, copy machines or unfunded mandates from the board of education.

More money would help expand the number of small schools or mitigate the powerful forces outside the school that crush students' desire and ability to learn. A school like Terrell might have succeeded with a more coherent, consistent plan, but it also needed to be broken into three smaller schools and given the resources to hire more and better teachers for more personalized instruction and social support. While reform has shifted resources toward the neediest schools within the Chicago system, the disparity of needs and resources within the metropolitan area remains enormous.

Furthermore, throughout years of structural tinkering, the

Chicago school system has devoted little money or effort toward retraining its teachers, many of whom were not well prepared. Over the long term, Bryk argues, teacher training will pay off far more than Vallas' current spending on more hours of instruction. Other school systems, like San Francisco, spend twice as much as Chicago in continuing education for its teachers.

Critics further charge that as a result of the mayor's higher-profile involvement in education, school policy is increasingly attuned to his political needs—such as attracting more middle-class whites to the city—at the expense of low-income students. Earlier this year, Vallas ordered the closing of a Loop high school that has had outstanding success training an overwhelmingly minority work force for clerical jobs in prestigious downtown businesses. It's being transformed into a magnet school that will mainly serve a growing population of professionals who have settled in nearby townhouses and condos.

In fits and starts, sometimes in dramatic spurts, Chicago schools are making progress as parents and local communities have assumed responsibility, principals and teachers have gained autonomy and collegiality, and the old assumption that urban kids couldn't learn has been replaced with higher expectations. The original reform effort needed a stronger central administration that would support reforms with better teacher retraining and stiff accountability for schools that failed to make progress. Now the successes of the initial reform may be eclipsed by a faulty claim that strict centralized controls and get-tough methods are what it takes to save public schools. This approach, now being celebrated around the country, may actually threaten the real gains being made and provide a dangerously counterproductive model of how to reform big city public schools and make them work. ■

A Catalyst for Change

Linda Lenz has covered the Chicago School Board for 20 years, 11 of those as a reporter at the Chicago Sun-Times and nine as editor of Catalyst, a monthly magazine on Chicago school reform. In These Times talked to Lenz about reform under Chief Executive Paul Vallas.



In These Times: What has Paul Vallas accomplished?

Linda Lenz: With the help of legislation passed by Republicans in Springfield, Vallas and the School Board have given the school system financial stability and, therefore, labor peace. They've gone on to build new schools and fix ones that were falling apart. These are huge benefits for education. They've probably used the public's money better than previous administrations, too. Adding summer school and requiring low-scoring students to attend it are a big plus, as is adding after-school programs for low-scoring kids. And then there's their mantra, accountability. That has jump-started many schools.

ITT: Vallas has been faulted for putting too much emphasis on standardized tests. Is that an accurate criticism?

Lenz: That's the next big issue in Chicago. The accountability system is pretty unsophisticated, and I'm not certain that even they understand all the ramifications. Focusing on the percentage of kids at or above national norms can really cloud what is happening in schools. To their credit, though, the administration hasn't mandated any instructional programs, and that's an improvement.

ITT: What troubles you most about the administration?

Lenz: One of the scariest things about this administration is that there is no debate. It will rush into a program, like school reconstitution, without thinking it through. The School Board doesn't have any education experts on it. Though members may question Vallas about his actions in certain areas, there is no engagement with the public on policy and direction. There are no serious reports and updates on their own programs. And the board's advisory committees are window dressing.

The city is bereft of watchdogs. Some former watchdogs are on the payroll. Others have programs in the school system and keep quiet. Those who begin to say anything critical in public get ridiculed and punished. And with a few exceptions, the press has been adoring. Vallas says, "We are doing good things, and that's what counts." And maybe it is. But it is a scary way to run a school system. ■



Higher Education...

By Lawrence Soley

Critics might call what they produce "McEducation," but their stocks are performing better than McDonald's.

The Apollo Group Inc. went public in 1994 with a stock offering of \$11 per share, raising nearly \$32 million for the company, and millions more for John Sperling, who founded Apollo and (with his son) retains ownership of 61 percent of its Class A shares. Since the offering, Apollo's stocks have split twice and now hover around \$33 per share. Strayer Education Inc. went public in 1996 at \$10 per share. Strayer's stocks are now worth around \$36 per share; it was even listed as a "hot growth company" in *Business Week's* 1998 list of the nation's fastest-growing small companies.

Relatively unknown outside of investment circles, Apollo and Strayer are two of a growing number of corporations in the for-profit higher education business. And they aren't just making money for investors. For-profit education is having a profound impact on the definition of higher education, academic freedom and the relationship between universities and the corporate sector.

The Apollo Group owns Western International University of Denver, which it bought in 1995, and the University of Phoenix, which enrolls 49,000 degree-seeking students. This year, enrollment at the University of Phoenix surpassed that of New York University, the nation's largest private, nonprofit university. Strayer operates Strayer University, which has 9,400 students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate degree programs in Northern Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C.

Other companies in the for-profit higher education business include Jones International Inc., which operates International University, and DeVry Inc., which operates the DeVry Institutes, with 33,000 students enrolled at campuses in nine states and Canada. Unlike the technical schools that advertise on matchbook covers and in comic books, these institutions offer degree-granting programs accredited or waiting to be accredited by the same associations that accredit major state and private universities.

For-profit universities, which sell themselves to students as

bargains, actually charge higher tuition than most community colleges, state universities and some nonprofit private colleges. Tuition and fees at the University of Phoenix come to \$6,500; Strayer University charges \$8,100. In contrast, tuition and fees at state universities average about \$2,500.

Students enroll at for-profit universities because they would not be accepted at other universities or because the for-profits offer flexible hours and the promise of quickly completed degrees. For example, the University of Phoenix accepts 99 percent of applicants and is classified as "noncompetitive" by *Peterson's Guide to Four Year Colleges*, meaning that "virtually all applicants are accepted regardless of high school rank or test scores."

The schools tailor their classes to nontraditional students—23 years and older—who are already employed and have shorter terms than most nonprofit colleges. The University of Phoenix schedules classes on one night per week for four hours and its semesters usually last just six or seven weeks. By contrast, universities on a typical semester system meet three hours per week for 16 weeks. Many for-profit universities also award credit toward graduation for life experiences. Students at the University of Phoenix even have received credit for

or Higher.

For-profit Universities Sell

going through a divorce. With these credits, students graduate even faster, giving them a strong incentive for enrolling at the for-profit school.

Strayer and Apollo demonstrate the enormous growth potential of firms in the for-profit higher education business. In May, the investment firm of BancAmerica Robertson Stephens (BARS) issued a report on higher education companies describing for-profit higher education corporations as

attractive investments in a market with great growth potential. BARS is bullish on for-profit higher education. "We cover six companies in this business and we have 'buy' ratings on five of them," says Howard Block, author of the BARS report. "It's a fragmented industry. There are thousands of colleges and universities around, which means that [these companies] can consolidate and grow easily. ... They can steal someone else's market share." The market share Block alludes

ing with other corporations and colleges to provide services. For example, Apollo acquired the previously nonprofit College for Financial Planning in Denver, one of the largest institutions providing financial planner education, in 1997 and opened several University of Phoenix satellite "campuses" and learning centers.

The company now operates in 12 states from 65 locations. These campuses and learning centers are leased offices or

storefronts in professional buildings and malls, not far from freeway ramps. Because Apollo merely leases office space, it doesn't have to spend money on building classrooms, dormitories or laboratories. During the coming year, Phoenix plans to open similar "campuses" in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Oklahoma.

The University of Phoenix, like the DeVry Institutes, has also expanded the number of fields in which it grants bachelor's and master's degrees. In addition to business, Phoenix offer degrees in nursing, education, counseling, therapy and computer science.

The rapid growth of for-profit higher education companies has so far hurt just a few small colleges. In 1997, West Coast University in Los Angeles closed its doors

after 88 years of operation. Robert L. Baker Jr., West Coast's president, attributed Phoenix's entrance into Southern California as a factor in his college's demise, saying that it cost Phoenix less to produce courses.

Other colleges fear the same could happen to them. In New Jersey, the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities opposed Phoenix's request for a license, claiming that the for-profit university planned to teach fewer hours with insufficient library facilities and with too many part-time instructors to comply with licensing requirements. All of these failures to comply with New Jersey state law were cost-saving measures that lowered educational standards, the association said. Nonprofit colleges in Pennsylvania also lobbied to keep the for-profit operations out, but their lobbying efforts proved to be no match

with those of their for-profit competitors.

Employers for about 75 percent of students attending the University of Phoenix pick up at least part of the tuition tab despite the costs, fewer teacher contact hours and the questionable practice of awarding life experience credits. As the *Chronicle of Higher Education* has noted, "While some other universities have only slowly warmed to partnerships with busi-



to is the \$200 billion spent annually on higher education in the United States, most of which currently goes to nonprofit private and state institutions.

The profit growth of these companies comes from growth

Profit\$?

Free Enterprise Education

in enrollment, tuition increases and low labor and overhead costs. Between 1993 and 1997, Strayer nearly doubled its revenues, while its profits tripled. The Apollo Group did even better. Its revenues increased from \$97 million to \$283 million during the same period, but its net revenues or profits went from \$1.1 million to \$33.3 million.

The for-profit universities have been able to increase their enrollments quickly through mergers and takeovers, aggressive marketing, expansion into other states, and by contract-

ness, [the University of Phoenix] actively courts the approval of industry." The *New York Times* described Phoenix as having set "itself apart with its unwavering corporate orientation."

Unlike most universities, the University of Phoenix cares little about academic research. Instead, it values business experience and hires professors from the business world. Phoenix refers to these boardroom-turned-classroom instructors as "practitioner-educators." Their job is to teach students how to be useful, get-ahead employees. Even students in non-business degree programs are taught to identify with their employers. Phoenix's nursing program in Michigan, where classes are taught in the suburban Laurel Park Mall, touts that students will be "organized into problem-solving teams of the type utilized successfully in business and industry. ... Our students develop the team building and leadership skills employers value."

This pro-business approach to higher education is succeeding. Not only are the enrollments of for-profit universities growing, but corporations are contracting with for-profit universities to provide in-house instruction to employees. The University of Phoenix has agreements with U.S. West, Intel Corp. and other companies. DeVry has a subsidiary, Corporate Educational Services, that provides the business community with "customized education and training programs" Its roster of clients includes AT&T, GTE and Philip Morris.

What further sets for-profit universities apart from their not-for-profit counterparts—and accounts most for their high profit margin—is their lack of full-time faculty. Strayer University has 364 faculty. Of these, 278 teach part time. Until two years ago, Phoenix had 7 full-time and 3,400 part-time faculty. Because of questions raised by accreditors, the university increased the size of its full-time faculty—it now has 45 full-timers on board.

Part-time faculty at Phoenix are typically full-time professionals with master's degrees, who teach evenings and are paid \$1,500 for teaching a course. While paid less than at other universities—Marquette University in Milwaukee, for example, pays part-time faculty an average of \$2,500 per course—faculty at Phoenix do not have to develop course content. This is developed by the university, and is the same for every instructor at every campus. Sarah Serra, director of Phoenix's Michigan "campuses," which are located in a professional building and a mall, explains that instructors at Phoenix "work with a module and use the same textbooks."

Stephen Spangehl, an official of the North Central Association of Colleges, which accredits the University of Phoenix and the DeVry Institutes and is considering accrediting International University, says that for-profit higher education "has separated the delivery function from the design function." Spangehl says this approach is "very different from the traditional approach," where the professor is responsible for developing and delivering the course.

Milton Blood of the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business, an association that accredits university business schools but not any of the for-profits, describes this type of instruction as "McEducation." At the University of Phoenix, for instance, instructors are told not to lecture: They are hired to "facilitate" a discussion of the university-prepared course materials by drawing on their industry experiences.

This approach to instruction radically changes the definition of academic freedom at colleges, which has traditionally held that professors are free to determine what to teach in their classrooms. The Phoenix approach puts course content in the hands of its corporate officials, not its professors.

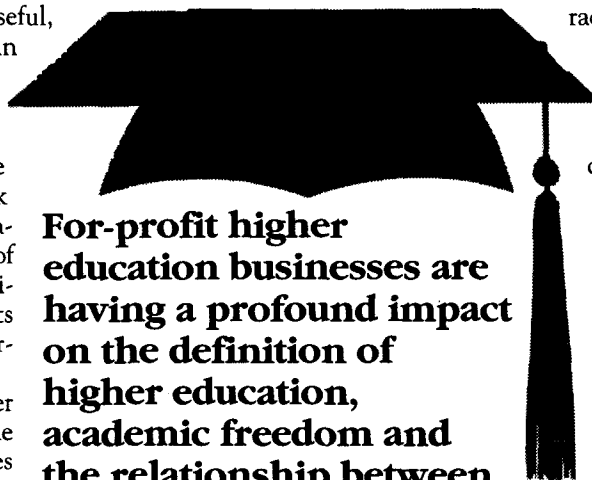
The separation of design and delivery at for-profit universities is even more clear at interactive universities, such as the Denver-based International University, which offers degrees through the Internet. International University hires "experts" and technicians who design its on-line courses and then hires part-time "instructors" who, for a small fee, answer email questions that students have about course materials. The

course designers work as independent contractors and therefore "the intellectual property is owned by International University," says Gustav Friedrich, who designed a course for the school. Because the university owns the content of the courses it offers, academic freedom doesn't apply as it does at traditional university.

International University and the University of Phoenix, unlike other educational institutions, are further able to cut costs because they do not have traditional libraries, which can be extremely costly to maintain. For example, Harvard University spends well more than \$50 million annually on its library; New York University spends about \$25 million; and many state universities, such as Colorado State University, spend more than \$8 million a year.

Instead of investing in things like libraries, these universities pay dividends to stockholders. John B. Wilson of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in New Jersey says that the University of Phoenix's lack of a library was one reason his group lobbied against the state's granting the Apollo Group a license to operate in New Jersey. "They should be held to the same requirements as our member institutions," he says. Rather than a library, students at Phoenix access an "online collection" containing abstracts and texts of periodicals.

"We use a number of different vendors," says Kurt Slobodzian, head of the University of Phoenix's online "learning research center." "There are about 5,000 publications available full text that are available to our students," he says. However, no books are available except for a few references that are kept on campus. According to Slobodzian, books are "far less critical than they were 30 years ago when I



For-profit higher education businesses are having a profound impact on the definition of higher education, academic freedom and the relationship between universities and the corporate sector. And they're making money for investors.

was in college." Besides, he says, libraries don't have enough copies for everyone to check out, anyway.

Despite the criticisms directed at for-profit education companies by traditional universities and their associations, some nonprofit colleges have adopted an "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" attitude. Nearly two dozen small nonprofit colleges, including Cardinal Stritch in Wisconsin, William Penn in Iowa and Indiana Wesleyan have signed agreements with the Apollo Group, making them "partner institutions." An Apollo Group subsidiary, the Institute for Professional Development, helps the colleges develop and market degree programs using the same methods as Phoenix. The colleges pay the Apollo Group a percentage of their revenues for the help. These contracts have proven profitable for Apollo and their partners. Cardinal Stritch College, which now calls itself a university, has become the second largest private university in Wisconsin.

Other colleges have emulated this strategy, opening satellite "campuses" around the country that principally employ part-time faculty, lack libraries and operate out of leased storefronts. In Wisconsin, there are more than 100 out-of-state degree-granting institutions in operation; 37 operate in Milwaukee alone.


Traditional colleges have responded to these storefront operations by reducing course work and making classes more marketable and business friendly. At Marquette University, for example, administrators suggested that departments reduce master's degree requirements to 27 credits and eliminate theses and professional projects.

The most dramatic response, however, has been for universities to become more closely tied to corporations, developing instructional programs of interest to businesses and providing in-house instruction to employees of companies, just as for-profit universities do. For example, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee teaches information technology to prospective M&I Data Services employees, who study a curriculum designed to serve the company's needs. Students take out loans to pay for the instruction but are guaranteed a job with M&I when they finish their coursework, provided they maintain a 3.0 grade point average. As the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* noted, "The students get an education; the school gets the students; and the business gets employees trained the way they'd like."

A more dramatic example is the Michigan Virtual Automotive College (MVAC), created by the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, the big three auto makers, the United Auto Workers and the state of Michigan in 1996. MVAC offers courses of interest to the industry. By fall, MVAC expects to have 2,000 auto industry employees enrolled.

Such corporate involvement marks the end of the tradition of nonprofit and state universities designing and delivering college courses. Increasingly, corporations, whether they are for-profit universities or companies seeking specific types of instruction for employees, are changing the traditional definition of higher education, making universities part of the marketplace of commerce rather than the marketplace of ideas. ■

Lawrence Soley, author of *Leasing the Ivory Tower* (1995) and *Free Radio* (forthcoming), teaches at Marquette University in Milwaukee.




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
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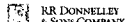
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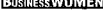
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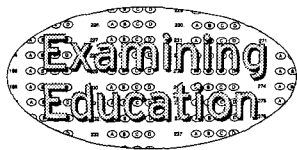
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ONLINE BUT OFF-TRACK

By CHRISTOPHER OTT

"It may," said one impressed college president, "mark the greatest innovation in education since Gutenberg invented the printing press."

This stirring comparison wasn't made about the Internet. W.W. Kemmerer, president of the University of Houston, used those words in 1953 to describe a new technology called educational television. ETV, as it was called during its brief heyday, was supposed to fundamentally alter education by making learning inexpensive and universally available, replacing live professors wherever possible with filmed lectures. National and local government officials saw the opportunity to reduce spending on teacher salaries and classroom space, and educators saw the opportunity to make instruction more widely available than ever before. "This is not an experiment," Paul Martin, president of California's Compton College told *Time* in 1958, "We are switching over."

Forty years later, Martin's old wiring is still in place at Compton College, but less than one percent of the school's current courses make regular use of ETV. Little remains of broadly envisioned plans to make education more affordable through ETV, and the medium itself is virtually forgotten.

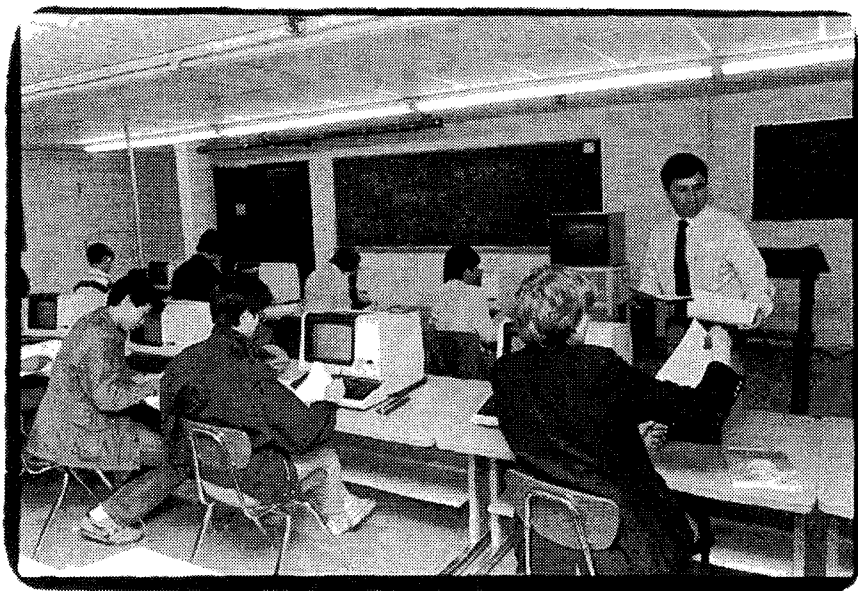
Today, great predictions are again being made about the promise of technology. President Clinton calls the computer a "teacher of all subjects." William A. Draves, president of the Learning Resources Network, an association for providers of continuing education programs and professional training, echoes the comparison of the Internet to Gutenberg's printing press: "The Internet is the greatest technological innovation in the last 500 years." But a look at educational technology in the past produces an uneasy feeling that students and schools may be getting lured into another expensive boondoggle.

ETV did take a small place in the classroom alongside traditional teaching methods, but the monetary savings it promised never materialized. Original estimates called for saving hundreds of millions of dollars a year nationwide, but progress was stymied by large start-up expenses. Costs for ETV studio and broadcasting equipment ranged as high as \$750,000 in the late '50s, with annual operating expenses in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. At a time when the large number of baby-boom students created a shortage of teachers, universities sunk money into a technological quick fix that wasn't as cost-effective as planned.

ETV's real problem, however, was that it was based on a

fundamental misunderstanding about what it means to teach and learn. Education is not a passive transfer of information that can be accomplished through the airwaves. Mastering most subjects requires live, spontaneous practice, and the guidance of a teacher who responds immediately to what is needed during the course of a lesson. ETV couldn't provide this. Today, this same misconception lies behind the belief that education will flourish online.

How much will this latest experiment cost? Wiring every classroom and library in the country is an educational mantra for the Clinton administration. The Federal Communications Commission is providing \$1.25 billion in subsidies to schools for Internet access. The University of Denver recently wired every building on campus with a fiber-optic network and plans to dedicate \$25 million to technology improvements over the next five years so that its classrooms will have access to intranets and the Internet. This sum could pay salary and benefits packages worth \$50,000 to 50 addi-



LIONEL DELEVINGNE

tional members of the faculty for 10 years.

A growing number of schools, including Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, N.C., now require students to carry laptops, sometimes including the cost of personal computers in the tuition. And in 1997, the Texas State Board of Education began flirting with plans to shift its spending on textbooks to laptops. The state spends about \$300 million a year on textbooks, but this amount would be exceeded even if a laptop for each of the state's 3.7 million public school students cost only an optimistic \$100 a year.

If every student nationwide will need a laptop plus the additional software and technical support, annual costs could climb into tens, or even hundreds, of billions of dollars. Frank Ryan, director of the Center for Language Studies at Brown University, expresses concern at the amount of money spent on wiring schools compared to the task of equipping every classroom with a television during the ETV era. "TVs were never that expensive, and every student didn't need one," he says. "TVs were also supposed to last more than five years. The per capita cost of computers for every student isn't even in the same league."

Will the new technology of the Internet succeed where ETV didn't, making it worth the huge expense? Draves says that online courses will offer access to the best instructors at low cost by accommodating 1,000 to 5,000 students. He also says that students can communicate with their online instructors via email. Pity the teacher who receives email from all 5,000 students in an Internet course.

Concerned by a search for technical quick fixes to educational problems, a few scholars wonder why we're so willing to believe that one technology or another can solve our educational problems. David Danaher, an assistant professor of Slavic languages at the University of Wisconsin who has developed educational software and worked on metaphorical models of learning, says the promise of educational technology is based on a culturally ingrained view of learning as a passive transfer of information. "We tend to think of a teacher as someone who pours knowledge into the empty heads of students as if it were a liquid," Danaher says.

If learning is just a matter of filling students' heads with knowledge, it makes perfect sense that a machine can do it as well as a teacher. But this approach to education is severely limited when it comes to subjects like the experimental sciences, the arts, foreign languages, literature, verbal communication skills and any kind of hands-on work. These aren't subjects that can be mastered by viewing a web page and taking an online quiz.

Proponents of the latest educational technology have rightly pointed out that there are huge problems in education today, such as the ineffectiveness of huge lecture-pit classrooms. But it does not necessarily do any good to replace a classroom-based model of learning with an Internet-based one. "They just want to take the worst form of education and make it cheaper and faster," says Danaher. "If they were actually interested in making education better, they'd get rid of the passive-transfer model online and in the classroom. That would be a real revolution."

In the midst of the push to get education online, some schools have embraced the opportunities offered by the latest educational technology, while recognizing its limits. One such school is the Logan School for Creative Learning, a private, nontraditional K-8 school in Denver. At Logan, students participate in online projects like Globe (<http://globe.fsl.noaa.gov>), where students can contribute their own measurements to a collective effort to monitor global climate changes. "One of the long-term goals is to put the student in the driver's seat of being a scientist. Teachers and students are trained in how to make observations, and the kids evaluate it before they submit it," science teacher Dan Kowal says.

In another class, one 12-year-old Logan student uses the Internet to find pictures of ancient structures like Machu Picchu to include in a year-long independent study. Younger students view online images from the Hubble Space Telescope.

Logan is not a typical school: An average class has only 17 students, the older students help teach and supervise the younger ones. Small-group projects and independent study are strongly emphasized. Focusing on self-motivation and creativity, the Logan School is ideally suited to take advantage of Internet technology, which offers students the opportunity to pursue independent projects in addition to more traditional work.

But as impressive as the school's use of the Internet is, teachers and administrators downplay its importance. Peter Stevens, Logan's executive director, says that the most essential piece of modern educational technology in the school is the copy machine. When asked about the most important problems facing education today, he says, "Lack of computers

is well down the list. Computers and the Internet are just tools. The kinds of skills this school is interested in can't come over the Internet."

Teachers and students at Logan are making good use of educational technology, but they don't depend on it. Susie Carol, who teaches a class of seven- and

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eight-year-olds, says that an overemphasis on technology seems to show that "people have forgotten how children learn." In Carol's classroom, her students are working earnestly on a variety of projects. "Look," she says, "they're learning and I've been gone for 10 minutes. I don't just give the students knowledge. I'm an assistant."

The most important "interactivity" in the classroom is still the interaction between teacher and student, and mere access to information is not an education. Instead of looking at more concrete ways to enhance the learning process—by reducing class size, re-evaluating curricular content and providing adequate financial support for crumbling schools—educational technology's greatest proponents are focusing resources instead on machinery that is ultimately little more than a new way to deliver information. Computer technology offers new ways to move data, but it hardly deserves to be called an educational revolution. In the midst of the current push to get schools online, the most remarkable approach to education lies in classrooms like Susie Carol's, where learning is treated as a process that the teacher guides, supports and encourages on a one-on-one basis. Technology can augment this process. But in classrooms like Carol's, the computers are usually shut off. ■

Christopher Ott has written about technology for the Denver Business Journal, Multilingual Communications & Technology and Independent Publisher. He previously worked as a developer of educational software.

Where the Riot Never Ends

Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster

By Mike Davis
Metropolitan Books
484 pages, \$27.50

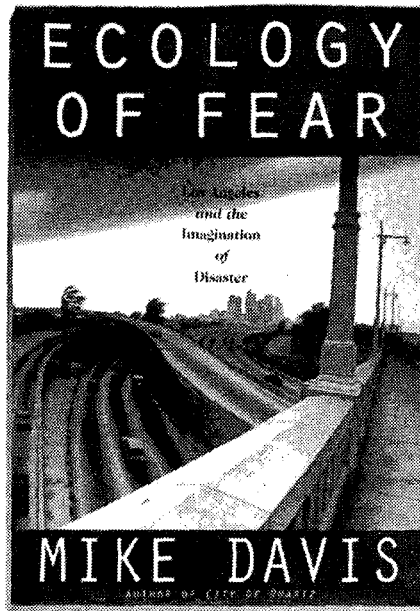
Reviewed by Michael Ventura

Last January there was a tornado in Long Beach. I'd lived in Los Angeles for 20 years, survived earthquakes, fires, mudslides and riots. But a tornado? It was reported in print and on TV as another of El Niño's freakish tricks. We don't have tornadoes in Los Angeles, right?

Wrong, as Mike Davis proves in his catalog of L.A. horrors, *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster*. This century has seen 75 "destructive tornadoes" in the greater Los Angeles area, including five downtown, and three just east of LAX's main runway. In fact, there have been 35 since I moved here. "Los Angeles," Davis writes, "is the one great North American metropolis that has suffered from repeated tornado penetrations of its business core." Oklahoma City, usually thought to have the world's worst urban tornado problem, gets one every four years. Downtown Los Angeles, Davis reports, gets hit every 2.2 years.

Granted our tornadoes tend to be smaller than Oklahoma's, and the injury rate has been miraculously low. Still, why aren't Los Angeles' tornadoes common knowledge, at least to its residents? Partly because local news coverage, both print and broadcast, insists on treating each twister as, in Davis' phrase, "nothing short of extraterrestrial." But mostly because of a larger phenomenon that is a major theme of Davis' book: the ability of Angelenos, both individually and institutionally, to retain a certain image of the city in spite of everything that contradicts and undermines it. This is especially true of white Angelenos—people of color, as Davis horrifically documents, usually don't have that luxury.

Quoting from the now-defunct *Herald Examiner's* editorial after one onslaught in 1993: "A series of



pyrotechnic thunderstorms? A pair of earthquakes, hours apart? Not one but two tornadoes? In L.A.? In a single day?" It happened. Was I out town? Or have I become, God help me, a true Angeleno? An important question for me, and for any Angeleno who reads this book. Yet it's the least of the questions that *Ecology of Fear* inspires.

Nobody knows more facts about Los Angeles than Mike Davis, and no one marshals their facts to better effect. He presents his knowledge in clear, efficient prose, and he doesn't kid around. Though he never comes out and says so, he depicts Los Angeles as the place where America's social epidemics rage most terribly. His Los Angeles is a city that other communities need to learn from before they too skid over the edge and find themselves in the same state of helpless free-fall.

Of course, *Ecology of Fear* begins with Los Angeles' uniquely murderous geology: the most lethal urban earthquake zone in the developed world. Earthquakes are a subject I've studied and written about; I mention this only to emphasize that I learned something new on almost every page of Davis' 50-page chapter on the tremblors. There's no better layperson's summary in so

compact a space. And though it is commonplace, to put it mildly, to say, as Davis does, that "market-driven urbanization has transgressed environmental common sense," there is nothing usual about the sense of peril he conveys. There isn't space to cite his data, but it's worth summarizing his conclusions. Quake activity around Los Angeles has been mild for nearly 200 years; we are long overdue not just for "the Big One," but for a series of Big Ones, and they almost certainly will occur directly beneath the city or very near it, devastating Southern California on a scale both difficult and terrifying to imagine. Dollar losses could be in the trillions. High-rise structures once thought safe from even large quakes could snap in two. The city's building codes, though better than nothing, are grossly inadequate. So are its emergency plans and services. And in the present anti-government political climate, nobody is willing to do anything to address the problem.

Unfortunately, Davis fails to see the possibility of an earthquake as not just a local but a national crisis. Roughly 40 percent of the U.S. GNP is generated in California. Southern California sits upon fault lines that sooner or later will generate a series of massive quakes that will cripple its capacities for a long time—perhaps for keeps. What happens to the American economy if it loses, say, 10 to 15 percent of its GNP capacity in less than a minute (the duration of most quakes)—not to mention the cost of rescuing and then absorbing the millions of refugees such a disaster would create? What would that do to America as a world power, not to mention the world economy? A major L.A. quake has the potential to be an event in world history.

And Davis barely touches upon the larger question: our technological, economically global civilization requires physical stability—an unreasonable request to make of a planet. That's just not how Earth behaves. In the United States alone, fault-lines and volcanoes riddle the West Coast and the Northwest (the Yellowstone area has as many

quakes as Los Angeles) and run up and down Florida and Manhattan (an island that has recorded two tremblors since Los Angeles' 1994 Northridge quake). The New Madrid fault in Missouri will sooner or later produce a massive quake on the scale of its 1812 event, which some seismologists gauge as more than a 9 on the Richter scale—only now such a quake would destroy the economies of several states. And there are also fault lines in Nevada, Virginia, Georgia, the Carolinas ... the list goes on. All have been geologically temperamental, and will be again. We have built a civilization that cannot easily adapt to that. Davis buys into the L.A. myth by making this strictly an L.A. issue.

There are other pieces missing. Davis takes a long detour into the disaster fiction that Los Angeles has spawned. It is interesting. But more interesting, and more important to his presentation, would have been an analysis of the New Age beliefs held by a large segment of the city's white elite. Many of those beliefs have contributed to, or been used to excuse, the group's insularity—for instance, by reducing the complex Hindu-Buddhist concept of "karma" to a Calvinist-like formula that "people are poor because of their behavior in a past life." After the 1994 elections gave us the Gingrich Congress, the *New York Times* reported that people describing themselves as "New Age" voted Republican in higher percentages than people describing themselves as Christian fundamentalists. The subject

obviously has more significance than disaster novels.

Still, the absence of these subjects doesn't dent the worth of his book. His chapters on earthquakes, fires, tornadoes, water and the flora and fauna of Los Angeles are fascinating. And his analysis of the city's always-depressing politics—and the developers' greed that has prevented the city from becoming what it might have been—constitute a lesson for any polity anywhere.

But the dangers and possible horrors of nature pale beside Davis' final chapter. Titled "Beyond *Blade Runner*," it is a succinct yet relentless overview of Los Angeles' politics of class and race, and their gruesome cost in human suffering. The restraint of his presentation makes it all the more effective. Davis calls Southern California "a constitutional no man's land." Reading his data, you must forcefully remind yourself that this is the United States of America, not Indonesia, not Russia, not China, not Mexico: the indigent and working poor taxed to provide amenities for the affluent; the monstrous growth of the prison lobby's power (California's prison system is surpassed in size only by China's and the United States' as a whole); the tolerance of white hate-groups as an unspoken official policy meant to obstruct and oppress people of color; the pervasive use of police surveillance; a privatization of "law enforcement" that often amounts to officially sanctioned vigilantism—one sickening symptom of

constitutional decay after another. Davis strips the guilt off the city and shows what it means, in terms of raw suffering, to structure a polity to benefit the affluent, with no other value governing political and economic decisions.

And there *Ecology of Fear* stops on a dime. After a few rather lame paragraphs of conclusion, it ends. At the risk of putting words in Davis' mouth, it's as though he's saying: "Even if we could do something about the earthquakes, what can we do about each other?"

Davis' abrupt ending, like a sudden silence, is eloquent and ominous. He offers no proposals, no cure. Make no mistake: I'm not faulting him for this. He has detailed dilemmas that are complex and well-nigh overwhelming. A concluding chapter of proposals would lessen their effect and play into his enemy's hands. The inevitable discussion would be about the proposals, not to consider them but to avoid discussing the data. Davis has drawn a detailed map and placed it in our hands. That's plenty of work for one book. However we respond, or fail to respond, we can no longer pretend not to know. Even though, as Davis demonstrates, pretending not to know seems to be what Angelenos do best. ■

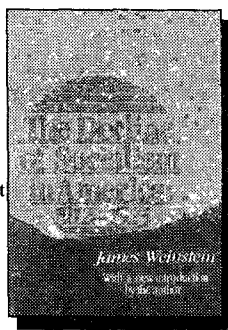
Michael Ventura's column, "Letters at 3AM," appears in the *Austin Chronicle*. He is working on a trilogy of novels about Las Vegas, the second of which, *One Marilyn Too Many*, will be published next year by Holt.

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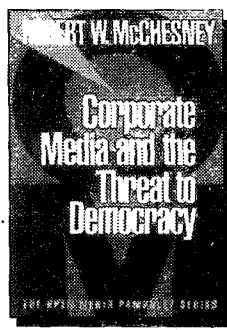


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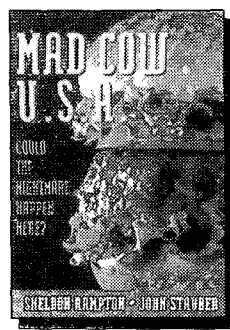
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The Liberators

Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality

By Paul Goodman

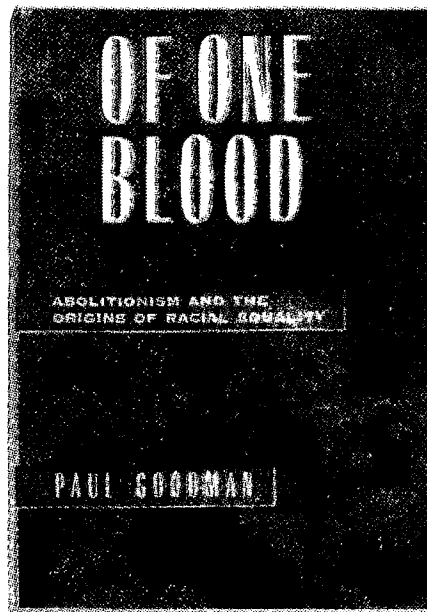
University of California Press

303 pages, \$35.00

Reviewed by Timothy P. McCarthy

The distinguished historian Paul Goodman begins his final book, *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality*, with an epigraph from the Book of Acts: "God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." From this prophetic point of departure, Goodman, who died of cancer in 1995, delivers not merely a significant revision of one of America's most important social movements, but also a humane tribute to the power of egalitarian ideals in a deeply flawed society. A fitting capstone to the life-work of an exemplary humanist, *Of One Blood* could well mark the "origin," as it were, of an overdue reassessment of American abolitionism.

But, then, *Of One Blood* is not about the abolitionist movement, per se, but about its origins. "It focuses on beginnings," Goodman writes in the book's preface, "before the antislavery movement became more complex and divided." He begins in 1816, when white public elites founded the American Colonization Society, and ends around 1840, when abolitionists, bitterly divided over tactics and ideology, split into two major factions: the radicals, who advocated the immediate abolition of slavery (or "immediatism"), and more pragmatic political abolitionists, who opposed slavery through mainstream institutional channels like party politics and court appeals. Goodman correctly distinguishes between those affiliated with the American Colonization Society (all of whom were white supremacists proposing to solve the dilemma of slavery by relocating emancipated blacks to Africa or the Caribbean) and those, both radical and moderate, who eschewed colonization for the far more difficult task of creating a biracial republic. By sticking to this narrow window of time and emphasizing



ing key ideas and social impulses, Goodman holds out "the hope ... that we can answer key questions that, despite a vast body of writing, have eluded convincing treatment."

This is a bold point, but one worth emphasizing. To say that much ink has been spilled on the subject of slavery and emancipation is an understatement. Curiously, however, the most recent generation's impressive revisionist work on the nature of slavery and the coming of the Civil War—inspired largely by a growing recognition of African-American agency—has not seen a balanced body of scholarship on the antislavery crusade. Too many historians still regard abolitionism as a largely white, middle class, male-dominated movement that began with the explosive rise of William Lloyd Garrison following the appearance of his newspaper, the *Liberator*, in 1831. It is precisely this consensus that Goodman seeks to complicate.

In the book's introduction, written in his final days, Goodman directly confronts those historical interpretations of abolitionism that rely too heavily on singular factors, like evangelicalism or capitalism, to explain its rise. Rather, Goodman identifies a variety of factors

contributing to the growth of abolitionist sentiment: the far-reaching Christian revivalism of the Second Great Awakening; the changing social roles of workers and women brought about by the "great transformation" of the market revolution; and, foremost, the militant opposition of Northern free blacks to colonization and white prejudice. Driving the abolitionist crusade, then, was a deeply held belief in racial equality that, Goodman insists, separated abolitionism from other antebellum reform efforts, like temperance and the Workingmen's movement.

The first target of Goodman's revisionism is the classic 1944 study, *The Antislavery Impulse*, in which historian Gilbert Hobbs Barnes used then obscure abolitionist correspondences to propose that the Midwestern evangelical revivalism of Charles Grandison Finney was the most important influence on emerging antislavery thought—not, as others had argued, the millennial radicalism of New Englanders like Garrison. Rejecting an either/or analysis pitting Finney against Garrison, Goodman instead contends that "the two regional movements were interdependent." Still, he remains unsatisfied with analyses that make religion the principle motivating factor in the rise of abolitionism. "While most antislavery men and women regarded slavery as a violation of Christian teaching," Goodman writes, "most Christians did not accept the fundamental immediatist doctrine that slavery and racial inequality are sin."

Goodman is even less persuaded by those who argue that the market revolution nurtured a new humanitarian impulse that, in turn, created fervid antislavery. Goodman wonders why "capitalism led only a small minority—and not many capitalists—in the United States to go beyond 'passive sympathy' and embrace immediatism." Here Goodman points to an oft ignored relationship between abolitionism and capitalism: Disruptions in social and economic status, wrought by unprecedented shifts in the market economy, led many people to question (rather than embrace) the excesses of capitalism—excesses that came to be associated with slavery and racial prejudice.

For Goodman, "a critical view of the

market revolution was central to the rise of the antislavery movement." Indeed, abolitionists drew strength from their critique of capitalism: They recognized a class conflict between antislavery radicals and political and economic elites. In presenting this struggle between "aristocrats," as he calls them, and the working and middling classes, Goodman resists an uncritical glorification of the "working class"—much of which was openly hostile to abolition—or, alternatively, the identification of all abolitionists with a lumpen "middle class." He even takes issue with historians' sloppy use of such terms to characterize an era when rapid shifts in social and economic relations made the language of class, as ever, highly contingent. Goodman demonstrates instead that "abolitionism exercised a heterogeneous appeal to both middle-class and wage-earning citizens." *Of One Blood* also underscores another overlooked, if self-evident, point: Abolitionists constituted a small minority of any antebellum group (with the exception of African-Americans). A good radical, Goodman is quick to remind us, was hard to find.

Nevertheless, abolitionism enjoyed much of its strongest support from women and African-Americans. On this point, Goodman is most original and persuasive. He resists the tendency to view female activism as largely limited to suffrage campaigns after the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention (or to separate suffrage and abolition as discrete goals, when, in fact, they were interrelated). In *Of One Blood*, women appear as full partners in the abolitionist struggle even before the founding of the first female antislavery society in Providence, R.I., in 1835. Goodman goes to great lengths to identify the tremendous stakes involved in women's participation, chief among them the defiance of a "separate spheres" ideology that relegated women's work to the private realm of the home. By self-consciously embracing public lives—as orators, writers, editors, teachers and petitioners—women broadened conceptions of social equality and posed fundamental challenges to gender relations—both within the ranks of the movement and in society at large.

And just as women had a transformative effect on the inner (and outer) workings of antislavery activism, African-Americans were the first and most influential abolitionists. Rather than treating them as anomaly or anecdote, as so many have done, Goodman affords black abolitionists—like editors Samuel Cornish and John Russwarm, clergymen Nathaniel Paul and John Gloucester, and militant pamphleteer David Walker—a central role of his

By rejecting calls for a
"Herrenvolk republic"
free blacks convinced
whites that racism
underpinned slavery.

story. For Goodman, the free black community's staunch opposition to colonization gave American antislavery ideology its most distinctive feature: a radical embrace of racial equality as a central objective. As the editors of *Freedom's Journal*, America's first black and abolitionist newspaper, wrote in 1827: "In the spirit of candor and humility, we intend by simple representation of the facts to lay our case before the public, with a view to arrest the progress of prejudice, and to shield ourselves against consequent evils." By openly rejecting calls for a "Herrenvolk republic" (an imagined national community where blacks, once emancipated from slavery, had no place), free blacks helped convince whites that "racism underpinned slavery and colonization, that colonization stood in the way of emancipation, and that as long as Northern whites embraced both, there was no prospect for ending slavery in the United States." In short, black abolitionists "created the modern biracial abolitionist movement."

Of One Blood is certainly the best book to date on the complex origins of American abolitionism, but it is by no means perfect. Goodman glosses over the textures and tensions of free black political culture—including the small, but visible, pro-colonization fac-

tion that took over *Freedom's Journal* in late 1827. He almost completely overlooks the role of African-American churches—particularly the African Methodist Episcopal Church in cities like New York and Philadelphia—in his discussion of the religious influences on abolitionism. And in his zeal to articulate a thesis about the abolitionist commitment to racial equality, Goodman distorts the complex nature of the relationship between blacks and whites in the movement, which was far more symbiotic—and contested—than he acknowledges. Reading this book one senses that the influence of African-Americans waned once they finally convinced white abolitionists to oppose colonization. We would do well to remember that African-Americans were the first and the last abolitionists. The impact of black activism was as definitive throughout the antebellum struggle to end slavery and racial prejudice as it was at the very beginning.

Nonetheless, in this, his final effort, Goodman delivers a captivating story brimming with intellectual integrity and political passion—one that deserves to be read widely by scholars and general readers alike. Particularly at a time when progressives are vulnerable on issues of race, we ignore Goodman's insights at our own peril. Insofar as it contemplates the multiple social and ideological influences on the rise of antislavery thought in the United States, *Of One Blood* will alter our understanding of both a movement and an era. But it also stands as a sturdy historical reminder that only a small minority of Americans have ever had the courage to embrace the goal of racial equality without condition or qualification. It is tragic that this eloquent book, written by someone who did, had to be published posthumously. For those who remain committed to the abolitionist vision of a nation without prejudice, *Of One Blood* generates mixed emotions: gratitude for its fresh insights, and sobering regret that we must encounter it, at last, one man down. ■

Timothy P. McCarthy teaches history and literature at Harvard University. He is the editor of *Freedom's Fiction: Antebellum Literature of Slave Rebellion*, forthcoming from Penn State Press.

Definitely Not Cops

The Farm

Directed by Liz Garbus
and Jonathan Stack

Out of the Past

Directed by Jeff Dupre

Reviewed by Pat Aufderheide

Television these days loves documentary, but the kind that's proliferating could almost make you nostalgic for *Cops*. Fox is busy refining the *When Animals Attack* school of documentary. The Discovery Channel is lovingly re-enacting life-and-death emergencies. Animal Planet is following the dog show circuit and calling it documentary. And the idea that television programmers would actually invest in serious documentary seems delusional, given this summer's mini-scandal over Anheuser-Busch's attempt to get its own, self-celebratory history aired on the Learning Channel.

That's just when filmmakers like Liz Garbus, Jonathan Stack and Jeff Dupre come in to stir things up. Garbus and Stack's *The Farm*, about life and death in the most feared prison in the United States, and Dupre's *Out of the Past*, about heroic gay and lesbian Americans, are both award winners, among other places, at the latest Sundance Film Festival. They followed very different paths to reach both general and targeted audiences, but their makers share a conviction that nonfiction film is a powerful part of social change.

The Farm, which showed theatrically in New York this summer and airs on the Arts & Entertainment cable channel this September, follows six inmates of Louisiana's Angola prison, along with their warden, over the course of a year. A new lifer's arrival and acculturation; a death row inmate's execution; bids for parole and pardon; a lingering death from cancer—they are all backgrounded by the changing seasons on the one-time slave plantation, where even today black men pick crops under the gaze of armed guards on horseback.

There are a lot of stories you could



tell out of Angola, whose name alone inspires terror. Yet the one Garbus and Stack tell is one of hope, even of redemption, and it is full of irony. There is the death-row inmate who describes a slow awakening to his own, and other people's, humanity—when it is too late to do anything but die. There is the new arrival, who says with some bemusement, as he picks onions in the fields, that this is the first time he has ever worked at all. There are the veterans, who have gotten an education and have cultivated powerful community leadership skills over the decades in prison. There is the warden, who meditates on forgiveness at sunset.

The film, structured to reveal richness of character, is anything but didactic. It avoids judgment, as it avoids clichéd controversy. Rather, it invites audiences to enter into the problems that these men's lives raise for all of us: the purposes of punishment; the high price of social neglect; the unquenchable impulse to do more than simply survive, in and out of prison.

The filmmakers hope that the film's approach, one of empathetic curiosity, is contagious. "I'd like to let people see inmates as human beings who have done the wrong things, but people nonetheless," Jonathan Stack recently told me.

Down on *The Farm*.

"There are 1.5 million people behind bars in America. They are a reflection of what has gone wrong in this society. We've got to hear what they have to say, and figure out how to do things better." Stack convinced A&E, as well as Britain's Channel 4, to put up almost \$300,000 to make the film. He's made compelling, social-issue documentaries before for public TV, Discovery, HBO and the BBC, always finding, as he says, "somebody who really cares" in mostly ratings-driven television.

A filmmaker whose heroes are social activists like Cesar Chavez and Martin Luther King, he's also a realist about the function of television. "I don't come to TV to start a revolution," he says. That's why Stack, with the help of the Puffin Foundation, hired an organizer to find ways to use *The Farm* for organizing around prisoners' rights, community dialogues on crime prevention and youth anti-violence education. "What we need to do here," he says, "is to connect with the groups that can use it to start community-level conversations."

Out of the Past, which opens in select theaters throughout the United States in August and September (and

later will air on public TV), plays an ongoing controversy against a long-hidden past. When teenager Kelli Peterson tried in 1996 to start a new club to support gay rights in her Utah high school, school officials and eventually the state legislature tried to block her. Faced with the prospect of losing federal funding for discrimination, they even ruled that no school clubs at all would be permitted, rather than permit hers. Kelli, refusing to let the issue die, went on to organize stu-

Education Network (GLSEN). The idea for a history film for teenagers grew out of a successful slide show made by a GLSEN member. But the activists lacked a compelling, contemporary figure who could provide a connection to the past—until they met Kelli.

Out of the Past interpolates Kelli's story into a series of biographical sketches of gay and lesbian historical figures. The film tells the story of Rev. Michael Wigglesworth, a Puritan minis-

ment. Each tale in this film illustrates in a different way how gender roles inflect historical role and public memory, and how leadership is exercised around and through those roles. It leaves viewers with an understanding that Kelli's story itself has a history.

Why these historical figures? "We had to find people who could speak for themselves, so kids could hear it from their own mouths," Dupre says. "That way, it has the greatest emotional impact, and you can't argue with fact." Along the way, they rejected the story of a Zuni transsexual (to avoid cross-cultural mistranslation), Henry James (not enough evidence) and Walt Whitman (too big a subject).

Dupre's film benefits from his own familiarity with the historical documentary, and from his connections in the world of public TV, where the Sundance award gives it crucial legitimacy. But it could not have been made without the gay rights networks through which funds were raised, and through which the film's after-air life will begin. Dupre and GLSEN are, through local chapters, aiming to reach teachers at the same time that activists are promoting the designation of October as gay and lesbian history month.

Documentary is the fastest-growing genre on television. It rarely means a film that brings you big questions or new approaches or tools to address problems. But sometimes it does. What these two films also signal is that television is only one of the ways in which documentaries make a difference. For both *The Farm* and *Out of the Past*, educational and social action networks will extend the life of stories that theatrical and television venues have only just begun. ■



Political activist Bayard Rustin is featured in *Out of the Past*.

dents and parents and took it into the courts instead—where it is still being contested.

But this was not the story that Dupre started out to tell. While working with noted documentarian Ken Burns on several projects, he was also working with activists at the Gay Lesbian and Straight

ter so afraid of revealing his orientation that he wrote in his own diary in code; of the "Boston marriage" of novelist Sarah Orne Jewett and socialite Annie Fields; of Henry Gerber, who was inspired by the gay movements of Weimar Germany to start an American gay rights organization in 1924; and of civil rights activist Bayard Rustin, whose contributions were slighted even within the greater civil rights move-

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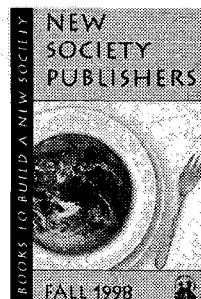
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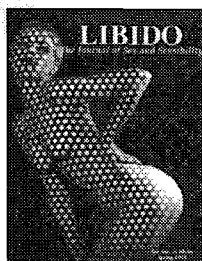
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received the least attention. We are frequently told that we live in a golden age (or at least a silicon age) of information. Students arrive in the university already wired and hyper-linked to distance-bridging, globally connected networks that afford almost instantaneous access to more information in an hour than Aristotle could find in his lifetime. American culture is swamped by a digital tsunami.

Thanks to photography, movies, billboards, mass magazines, radio, recorded music, television and computers, the flood of information and image surrounds and penetrates everyday life. Particularly for the young, the sum of images, songs and stories amounts to a daily curriculum, purporting to tell how things go, have gone and will go. The amalgam of images and information bits, most of them evanescent, adds up to a culture in hot pursuit of the new. To our students, a great deal of everyday life feels like a carnival of mass-manufactured stories. Day in and day out, they are awash in images, actors, dramas. Young people are pressed to build their identities from shared fantasies of self-transformation, villainy and rescue. The world they share in common is peopled with celebrities. Some endure, like Diana, "the people's princess." Most come and go, making way for the next season, the next style, the next buzz.



Only impressionable psychotics could be held in thrall for long by the bulk of popular culture's minuscule dramas. We experience most of the messages minimally, as sensations of the moment. But the whole of the imagescape is always clamoring for attention and often enough claiming it. Caught in the cross hairs of what the comic writer Larry Gelbart has called "weapons of mass distraction," how can we know, deeply, who we are? How shall we find still places in the turning world? How shall we learn to govern ourselves?

And what does it mean, this "information" for which we are to feel grateful? When a neo-Nazi puts up a Web site maintaining that Auschwitz was not a death camp, he is adding as much "information" to the gross informational product as when somebody else analyzes global warming. Garbage in, garbage sloshing around. When people "chat" about the weather in Phoenix or Paris, they circulate information, but this does not mean they are deepening their sensibilities or improving their democratic capacity to govern themselves. Long before Hollywood or computers, the French observer Alexis de Tocqueville wrote of America: "What is generally sought in the productions of mind is easy pleasure and information without labor." The Walkman, the remote control and the computer mouse were all produced toward this same end.

When information piles up higgledy-piggledy—when information becomes the noise of our culture—the need for a

liberal arts education is especially urgent. Students need chaff-detectors. They need an orientation to philosophy, history, language, literature, music and arts that have lasted more than 15 minutes. In a high-velocity culture, the liberal arts have to say: Take your time. Professors must tell students: Trends are fine, but you are at the university to learn about what endures. They have to say: We don't want to add to your information glut. We want to offer some ground from which to see the rest of what you will see. Amid the weightless fluff of a culture of obsolescence, here is Jane Austen on psychological complication and Balzac on the pecuniary squeeze. Here is Dostoyevsky wrestling with God, Melville with nothingness, Douglass with slavery. Here is Rembrandt's religious inwardness, Mozart's exuberance, Beethoven's longing. In a culture of chaff, here is wheat.

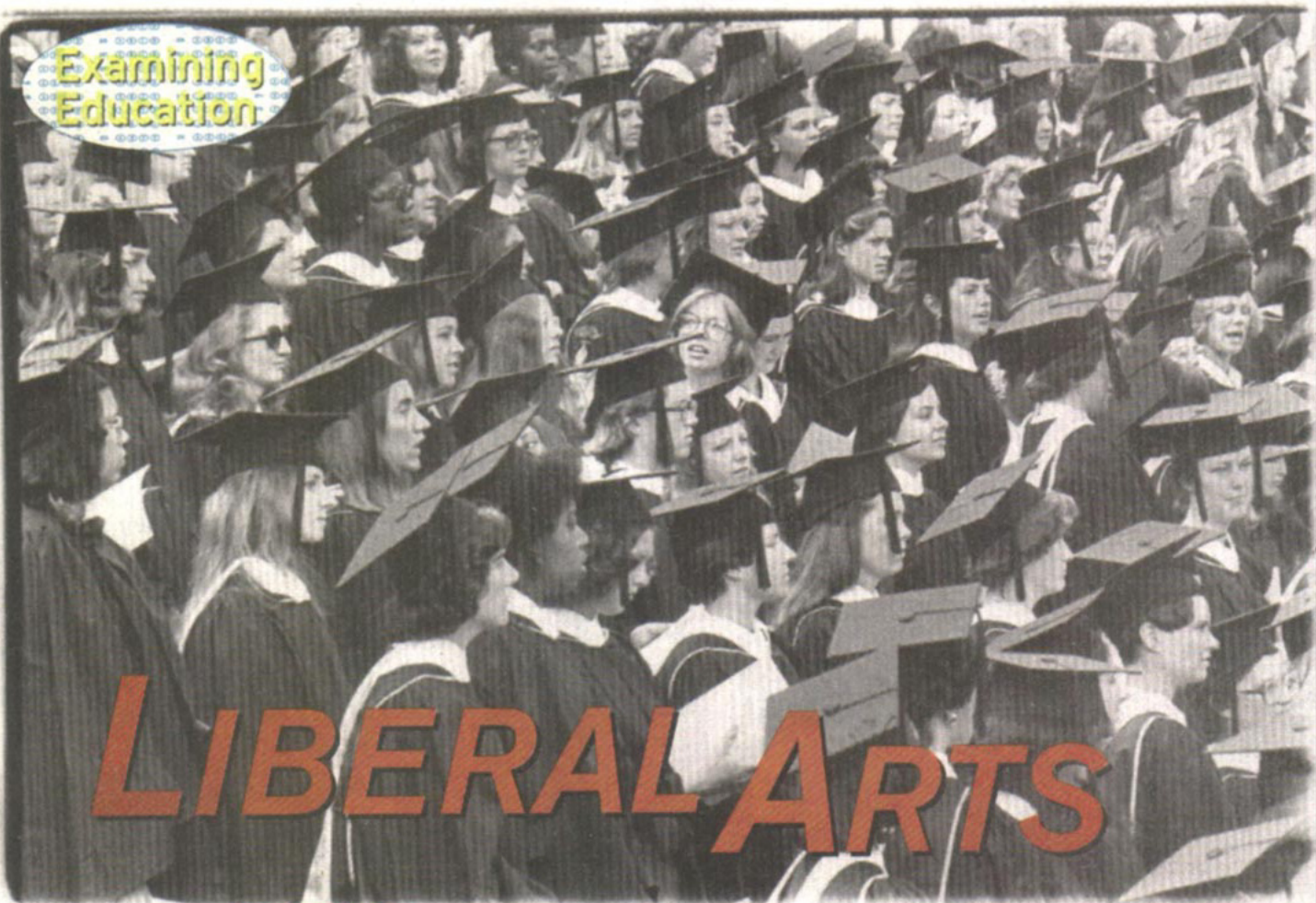
The point is not simply to help us find our deepest individual beings. It is also to help new generations discover the ways in which we belong to the common run of humanity. Common concerns about life and death, right and wrong,

beauty and ugliness, community and humanity persist throughout the vicissitudes of individual life, throughout our American restlessness, global instabilities and the multiple livelihoods of an age of retraining, downsizing and resizing. Shifting identities as we careen through careers and cultural changes, we need continuities to counteract the vertigo.

Finally, we need to cultivate the liberal arts in a democratic spirit—not necessarily for the sake of piety before the past (though that spirit should not be ruled out), but to pry us out of parochialism. In preparation for citizenship, the liberal arts tell us that human beings have faced troubles before—troubles both unlike and like our own. They tell us how people have managed, well and badly. Access to a common, full-blooded humanities curriculum would help our students cross social boundaries in their imaginations. Such a core could help students orient to the common work of citizenship, help them challenge (or bolster) whatever views they started with, and in any case help them understand why not everyone else in the world agrees.

These days, no intellectually serious teacher can help but notice how many students, of all stripes, arrive at college with shallow and scattered educations, ill-prepared to learn. They are greeted by budget pressures and short-sighted, panicky overseers. Under these circumstances, educational principles are put on the defensive. But a strong liberal arts curriculum can teach all surfers to dive—to discover the depth of their historical situation, their social condition and, indeed, themselves. Today's common curriculum could not be that of 1950, any more than 1950's was that of 1900. But through a constructive debate over the makeup of a common curriculum, the academic left and right could find some common ground in their continuing quests for a higher education that is democratically useful, citizenly and smart. ■

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Examining
Education

LIONEL DELEVINGNE

LIBERAL ARTS

VERSUS

INFORMATION GLUT

By Todd Gitlin

The culture wars over canons and curriculum at American colleges may finally have been fought to a standstill, but the liberal arts are hardly free from crisis. In fact, we might as well program a computer to type "liberal arts" and "crisis" with a single stroke. The terms are inseparable because a liberal arts education seeks to cultivate knowledge, reason, aptitude and taste for what endures, while we live in a society devoted to relentless change.

Colleges and universities today are tempted to swing in whatever direction consumers want. Students come to higher education for largely vocational reasons. A diploma is a meal ticket. Ever more students work their way through school and graduate in debt. The surrounding society preaches to them about the overpowering value of money. They see little evidence that philosophy, literature, history, foreign languages, aesthetics or even coherent expression are valued by the culture at large. They arrive with only the sketchiest command of history or Western literature, let alone experience with other histories or other literatures. Increasingly, they are told that their education must be multicultural, but

their grasp of any culture is slight. Few can write cogently, but the humanities become more abstruse. Immersed in high-technology media and peer culture, they are expected, now, to accept the authority of elders and traditions.

Partisans on both sides of the canon wars have paid little attention to one of the best reasons why universities should cultivate knowledge that is relatively enduring: to anchor a high-velocity, reckless, lightweight culture whose main value is marketability. In a society that is prodigiously successful at producing material wealth, much of which goes toward affirming that anything goes, we need institutions that stand by values independent of the market. If universities are not those institutions, what shall be? And since the liberal arts aim to understand what the world is—to teach who we are, who we have been and how to think—how could they not be embattled?

Of the many challenges to the liberal arts—vocationalism, canon wars, identity politics—the glut of images, stories and facts in which the young are immersed has

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